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Government



Chamber's Pillar Historical Reserve

Joint Management Plan October 2010



Acknowledgements

This Plan is the result of many hours of consultation and planning between the Traditional Owners of Chamber's Pillar Historical Reserve and Parks and Wildlife rangers, planning and joint management staff. Staff of the Central Land Council have assisted the joint management partners throughout and provided much valued input into the Plan's preparation.

Note: Italicised statements throughout this Plan are quotes of Traditional Owners made during the preparation of this Plan.

Chamber's Pillar Historical Reserve
Joint Management Plan

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Summary of this Plan

About 6500 intrepid visitors travel to the remote and beautiful Chamber's Pillar Historical Reserve each year, and are rewarded with a tranquil bush experience in a truly remarkable landscape. They are encouraged to explore the Reserve, with opportunities for short walks and photography. Interpretive signs also enable visitors to discover the rich early European history associated with the Reserve and the living culture of the Arrernte Traditional Owners.

The natural, low key character of the Reserve is reflected in its relatively few management requirements. With an area of only 340 ha, the Reserve is not viable for species conservation. It is home to a relatively small number of native species that are typical of the region. Biodiversity management is therefore a low priority. Management activity will focus on:

- Protecting and interpreting the cultural, historical and natural values
- Providing Traditional Owners with opportunities to work on country
- Preserving the natural, remote and tranquil character of the Reserve
- Enhancing the visitor experience through improved facilities and camping, as far as resources will allow.

Responsibility for decision making will be shared by the partners, being Traditional Owners as a group and the Parks and Wildlife Service. They will be guided by this Plan and jointly developed policy and guidelines. Most decisions will be made at annual planning meetings by the partners, supported by a small Joint Management Committee which will be convened as required. Cross-cultural governance training for both partners will ensure that the partnership is equitable and effective.

Whilst day-to-day management of the Reserve will remain the responsibility of the Parks and Wildlife Service, Traditional Owners will have the opportunity to connect with country and pass on knowledge during planned programs and joint management activities. These will be supported by the Parks and Wildlife Service to the extent allowed by resources and capacity. External resources may be pursued for additional cultural projects identified by Traditional Owners. Other agencies such as the Central Land Council and Tourism NT may assist as appropriate.

While the partners acknowledge that the broader work and training aspirations of Traditional Owners will not be met by joint management alone, every effort will be made by the Parks and Wildlife Service to provide Traditional Owners with work at Chamber's Pillar. In time it is envisaged that Traditional Owners will take up enterprise opportunities in tourism and have capacity to undertake most, if not all, management programs under contract.

A shared vision

“People and country doing well.”

The Traditional Owners of Chamber’s Pillar Historical Reserve and the rangers of the Parks and Wildlife Service value knowledge and want it to be shared and passed on, so that country and culture are looked after now and for future generations.

The joint management partners will continue to communicate clearly and work together in a way that encourages:

- Trust and respect for each other
- Respect for sites and country
- Commitment and progress
- Opportunities for Traditional Owners.



Visiting country is an important part of keeping country and culture healthy and passing knowledge on.

1. Introduction

The Reserve and its values

“That place there, is very important for that gecko man.”

Chamber's Pillar is a striking and recognisable finger of sandstone, rising from the red desert dunes in a vast landscape of broken, weathered mesas. Viewed from the rugged jump-up to the northeast of the Reserve, it towers an impressive sixty metres above sandy hummock grasslands, groves of desert oaks, mallee and acacia. Against the Central Australian sky, the pale Pillar with its distinctive rust coloured peak is dramatic, particularly at sunrise and sunset.

For the Arrernte Traditional Owners, the Reserve is a cultural landscape imbued with cultural, historical and spiritual significance and forms part of their contemporary identities. The three prominent rock formations in the Reserve – Chamber's Pillar, Castle Rock and Window Rock – are associated with the creation story or Dreaming of the fierce knob tailed gecko man, his promised wives and his mother-in-law.

Chamber's Pillar became a navigational aid more than a century ago when the first European exploration parties reached Central Australia. Many of these early explorers and pioneer settlers of Central Australia engraved their names or initials into the soft sandstone of the Pillar, creating a permanent record of early European colonisation. The Reserve is listed on the Register of the National Estate and has been listed in the NT Register of Heritage Places and Objects under the *Heritage Conservation Act* for the historical engravings on the Pillar.

Some of the first Europeans to describe the Pillar include John McDouall Stuart, Ernest Giles and John Ross, the leader of the Overland Telegraph Line survey team. Stuart named the Pillar after one of the sponsors of his expedition, James Chambers. Castle Rock takes its name from his description of the “remarkable hills which have the appearance of old castles in ruins”.

The Horn Scientific Expedition also visited Chamber's Pillar in 1894. The expedition's biologist Baldwin Spencer became the first to record the story of *Iterrkewarre*, as told to him by Frank Gillen in Alice Springs.

The Reserve (NT portion 843) was first declared under Section 103 of the Crown Lands Ordinance on 1 July 1970. It was declared an Historical Reserve (No. 1277) under Section 12 of the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* on 30 June 1978 (NTG 26A) and was named under that Act on 21 September 1979 (NTG 38). The entire Reserve was subsequently declared a heritage place under the *Heritage Conservation Act* on 5 October 1994 (NTG G40). The three features on the Reserve are all registered sacred sites under the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act*.

In 2003, the Reserve was listed on Schedule 1 of the *Parks and Reserves (Framework for the Future) Act*. Title has recently been transferred to Traditional Owners under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* and leased to the Northern Territory Government for 99 years and be jointly managed by the Northern Territory Government and the Traditional Owners of Chamber's Pillar.

Despite its small area of only 340.1ha, the Reserve has significant natural, cultural, spiritual, historic and scenic value to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Approximately 6500 people visit the Reserve every year, including those who travel with commercial tour companies.

Located 162 km south of Alice Springs within the Australia's Red Centre National Landscape, the isolated and rugged nature of the Reserve is an attraction in itself. Many visitors value the four wheel drive experience required to access the Reserve, as well as the sand dunes, sandstone ridges and claypans which comprise the spectacular landscape. However, it is the striking butte of the Pillar itself and the historic significance of the engravings which are the primary scenic and tourism attractions of the Reserve.

The Reserve's natural and cultural values offer educational opportunities for the joint management partners and visitors. As the original inhabitants of the area and as workers in the pastoral industry in the region, Traditional Owners have considerable knowledge about the region, its geography, natural resources and local history to contribute to the joint management partners' shared understanding of the Reserve and its surroundings.

The cultural and historic stories associated with the Reserve are of particular interest to visitors. The unique geomorphology of the area also lends itself to furthering public understanding of the processes of landscape formation from both a scientific and Arrernte perspective. Growing interest in co-operative management of protected areas may mean that joint management of this Reserve will be of interest also.

The Reserve is bounded by Maryvale and Idracowra pastoral properties. The nearest settlement is the Aboriginal community of Titjikala with a population of approximately 250 people.



The three main features of the Reserve are associated with the knob tailed gecko man Dreaming.

This Plan

“Years ago Aboriginal people had no say – we’ve got that chance now.”

The Parks and Wildlife Service and Traditional Owners, assisted by the Central Land Council, worked together to write this Plan through a number of participatory planning meetings. The interests of local tourism stakeholders have been considered together with the broader regional interests of the tourism industry. This Plan explains how the joint management partners will work together to look after the Reserve, provides for the ongoing conservation of the Reserve’s significant natural, cultural and historic resources and continued public use and enjoyment. It shows how public interests in the Reserve will be best served while recognising the significance of the area to local Arrernte people. It sets management objectives against which the Parks and Wildlife Service, Traditional Owners and the general public may measure progress. The Plan presents both general and specific management directions with respect to the Reserve’s stated purpose and current management issues. It also outlines measures that will ensure future development of the Reserve is well-considered and appropriate. Italicised statements throughout this Plan are quotes from Traditional Owners made during the preparation of this plan.

Chamber’s Pillar Historical Reserve will continue to be an important place for low key, nature and culture based tourism. Priorities will include:

- Protecting and interpreting the cultural, historical and natural values
- Fulfilling Traditional Owners’ aspirations to work on country
- Preserving the remote and tranquil character of the Reserve.

This Plan supersedes the 1994 Plan of Management for Chambers Pillar Historical Reserve. It will be reviewed after five years and remain in effect until amended or replaced by a new Plan. A Lease and Indigenous Land Use Agreement provide further information on joint management arrangements.

The Aboriginal land subject to this Joint Management Plan is Aboriginal Land under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*. The Iterrkewarre Aboriginal Land Trust holds title on behalf of Traditional Owners.

Traditional Owners, Parks and Wildlife and Central Land Council Staff meet to work on the Plan (2007).



The joint management partners

Consistent with the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act*, the partners responsible for decision making and management are the Parks and Wildlife Service and the Reserve's Traditional Owners.



Traditional Owners

The Traditional Aboriginal Owners of the Reserve identify as Arrernte and are from the country around the Finke and Hugh Rivers. As a result of their contact history, today a number of people speak the locally recognised version of Arrernte but only a few know the language well. Luritja is also commonly spoken by the Traditional Owners of the area.

Traditional Owners continue to observe cultural traditions and uphold traditional law, maintaining powerful connections to their country guided by the traditional Arandic model of land tenure. According to these principles, people identify with relatively well demarcated totemic tracts of country called *pmere* in Southern Arrernte and referred to as estates in anthropological literature.

These estates are identified by reference to several ancestral sites that make up a song or story line (Dreaming), or sections of such lines. Estates tend to be strongly centred on a main site and/or the major totemic ancestor. The features of Chambers Pillars, Castle Hill and Window Rock are the physical manifestations of one such story line and are a permanent reminder of the importance of the proper way to interact with family. Traditional Owners of the area strongly maintain the stories for Chambers Pillar.

Aboriginal people have rights in an Arandic estate country through descent. They inherit primary rights in country from their father and father's father and are known as *pmerekertweye* ("bosses"). Rights in country through maternal connections are also important and are usually traced through one's mother's father. These people are known as *kwertengwerle* ("managers") and are required for rituals and for "looking after" sites and country for their mother's family.

A third important base for asserting affiliation to country in Arrernte traditions is a person's place of birth, or the birth (or conception) place of one's mother or father. Although *pmerekertweye* and *kwertengwerle* hold different rights and responsibilities, both must be involved in matters relating to the country for which they hold those rights. This is an important aspect of Aboriginal governance and management of country.

In practice it can be difficult for an individual to maintain connections to all the estate countries they have rights in. An individual has to make choices about where to ritually and socially realise his or her rights. This can be achieved by spending much of one's life in a particular area of country and acquiring ritual and ceremonial instructions for it from senior *pmerekertweye* and/or *kwertengwerle*. The strongest rights to country are thus based on being *pmerekertweye* or *kwertengwerle* and knowing the ancestral songs and rituals for that country.

Members of most families have lived and worked together on different pastoral stations along the Finke River for several generations and accordingly, have strong historic associations with the Chamber's Pillar area.

The Arrernte people suffered during the colonial period as their traditional country became the main communications corridor to the south for European explorers, early settlers and pastoralists. The establishment of the Overland Telegraph Line and the completion of the railway to Alice Springs in 1929 further intensified the impact of colonisation on local Aboriginal people.

Access to traditional land was restricted for the Arrernte in the Chambers Pillar area from the 1870s onwards as the South Australian Government leased their land to pastoral interests, hoping to create a large scale cattle industry. By the economic crash of the 1890s, virtually all Arrernte country in the vicinity had been leased to pastoralists. Indigenous populations previously living in an environment with vast and diverse resources, eventually became dependent on a ration based economy associated with outstations and homesteads. Access to water and other resources became restricted and the landscape was denuded by stock.

The drought of 1889-94 further reduced Arrernte people's access to resources and forced Aboriginal people to move from station to station as work became available. In order to survive, Aboriginal people took up ration paying jobs and by the turn of the century low cost Aboriginal labour was fundamental to the establishment of the pastoral industry.

The influenza outbreak of 1919-20 also had a catastrophic impact on the Arrernte population and intensified the impact of colonisation on a population which was becoming increasingly associated with stations and station life. Many Aboriginal people who grew up and worked on pastoral stations such as Maryvale, Idracowra, Horseshoe Bend and Henbury have memories of passing, visiting and camping in the Chamber's Pillar area over many years.

*Traditional Owners
maintain powerful
connections to their
country.*



People would pass by or stop at the Pillar as they journeyed on camels, horses, with bullock-wagons or on foot between the Idracowra and Maryvale homesteads and on to Alice Springs via the old South Road. Aboriginal station workers at Maryvale and Idracowra also recount how they camped with their families at the Pillar when out fencing or doing other jobs for extended periods of time.

The Pillar was a guiding marker in the landscape and a rest area for people travelling between places further out to the east and to the northwest along the Finke River and southwest towards Mt Ebenezer, Erldunda and Curtin Springs.

By the 1950s in the South-Central region, Aboriginal people were encouraged to leave pastoral stations and, apart from the people who have remained in the area as residents of Titjikala and nearby outstations, visits by Aboriginal people to the Chamber's Pillar area became increasingly rare during the 1960s and 1970s. At this time, many Aboriginal station workers were made redundant. They had to move their families into state settlements, missions or Alice Springs. Consequently, many members of Traditional Owner groups have grown up and lived elsewhere, and their visits to the Chamber's Pillar area have been infrequent. Some younger people have not been there at all.

Despite the dislocation of many Arrernte people associated with the area, Traditional Owners strongly maintain their culture and connection to country. They have been involved in business ventures such as Gunya Titjikala and Oak Valley Tours offering cultural tours and camping for domestic and international tourists. People also live and work in Alice Springs and some travel further to pursue careers and lifestyle. While people may be away from country for long periods of time, their strong attachment to the place remains unbroken. Most Traditional Owners who live elsewhere express a strong wish to visit Chamber's Pillar more often.

Traditional Owners are looking forward to the new opportunities afforded by joint management and proud to have regained title to their land under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act*. They are keen to be involved in all management programs on the Reserve and utilise time spent on country to pass on important knowledge to young people and each other.



The Parks and Wildlife Service of the Northern Territory

The Parks and Wildlife Service is a division of the Department of Natural Resources, Environment, the Arts and Sport. It is a field-based organisation with approximately 120 rangers supported by scientific, planning, management and administration staff.

The Service is dedicated to conserving the natural and cultural values of parks while providing high-quality nature-based tourism and recreation opportunities for visitors. The Service is committed to engaging the public and working with the interests of the community.

The Territory's park system includes some 87 parks and reserves with a total area of nearly 47000 square kilometres. Parks are a vital investment in our future. They underpin the conservation of our environment and biodiversity. If well-managed they will provide sustainable social and economic benefits. Parks are at the heart of the Territory's tourism industry, our largest employer and second-largest income earner.

The Service has entered an exciting new era. Where previously joint management arrangements have applied to just a few parks, they now apply in Territory law to a third of the parks estate and are integral to the Service's business. The Service is responding with new ways of thinking, introducing new training and other programs to develop rangers' capacity as effective joint managers.

The Parks and Wildlife Service is not new to joint management. Garig Gunuk Barlu National Park in the Top End has been jointly managed since 1981. Other examples include the high profile Nitmiluk National Park and Tnorala (Gosse Bluff) Conservation Reserve. While each park and Traditional Owner group is unique, the Service has learned much from its shared management of these parks.

The Parks and Wildlife Service is committed to seeing that joint management partnerships grow and become truly equitable and that Traditional Owners benefit culturally, socially and economically from joint management.

This Joint Management Plan has been developed by the joint management partners in a very positive spirit. Like the Traditional Owners of the Reserve, the Parks and Wildlife Service is optimistic about the future.

The Service is rapidly developing its capacity as an effective joint management partner.



2. Making decisions together

“Talk to Traditional Owners and listen to their feedback.”



Introduction

Traditional Owners and the Parks and Wildlife Service are looking forward to learning and working together. However, both partners acknowledge that the joint management partnership is new and that it will take time to build a strong working relationship.

Making sure that the joint management partners have a process for making decisions is essential for good joint management. Understanding how to make decisions in the right way means that Traditional Owners and the Parks and Wildlife Service can face challenges and take up opportunities without compromising the values of the Reserve.

This section of the Plan talks about how the partners will make decisions together and outlines these processes.

Joint management of the Reserve will be consistent with this Plan and the:

- *Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act*
- Aboriginal law and culture associated with Chamber's Pillar Historical Reserve
- Decisions made by the joint management partners
- *Heritage Conservation Act (NT)*
- ICOMOS 'Burra Charter'
- Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) for Chamber's Pillar Historical Reserve
- Lease to the Northern Territory Government of Chamber's Pillar Historical Reserve
- *Native Title Act*
- *NT Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act*
- *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act.*

Principles for making decisions and working together

- Decision making needs to be equitably shared.
- Traditional decision making processes must be recognised and respected.
 - Old people have the knowledge.
 - *Pmerekertweye* and *kwertengwerle* must be involved in matters relating to country.
 - Men and women will sometimes need to make decisions about different things.

- Good decisions can only be made when both partners have a clear process and guidelines, good information and enough time to consider decisions properly.
- Regular checks are important to ensure good decisions are being made and that joint management is working well.
- Both partners are responsible for making joint management work and need to be committed to that objective.
- Mutual trust and respect is fundamental to successful joint management.
- Listening to each other and communicating honestly are essential to the partnership.

Aims

- To ensure that communication between the partners is strong.
- To make good decisions which meet the needs of the joint management partners, the public and keep country healthy.
- To meaningfully involve Traditional Owners in the Reserve's management and ensure that they benefit from joint management.
- To ensure that the joint management partners are satisfied with the processes and outcomes of joint management and the partnership is equitable.
- To practically implement joint management on the ground and progress the vision and aims of this Plan.

Good communication makes for good joint management decisions.



Background

Joint management provides exciting new opportunities for natural resource management, combining traditional knowledge and scientific management. Traditional Owners relate readily to the concept of joint management. They say: “our ancestors worked together to look after that country – we’re just repeating that process”. The success of joint management will be measured against achievement of the aims in this Plan and the satisfaction of the joint management partners.

For Traditional Owners, the relationship between *pmerekertweye* (“bosses”) and *kwertengwerle* (“managers”) is an important part of Aboriginal governance and management of country. This relationship is one of ritual reciprocity and although *pmerekertweye* and *kwertengwerle* hold different rights and responsibilities, both must be involved in decisions relating to their country. Knowledge of songs and rituals for country also plays a primary role in delineating decision making roles for Traditional Owners. Ensuring that elders are acknowledged as the most senior and important custodians of land is also critical for Traditional Owners and for joint management.

Chamber’s Pillar Historical Reserve has relatively few management requirements, and decision making structures aim to streamline the process (see Figure 1). It is important that Traditional Owners and Parks and Wildlife equitably share responsibility for making decisions about the Reserve as partners.

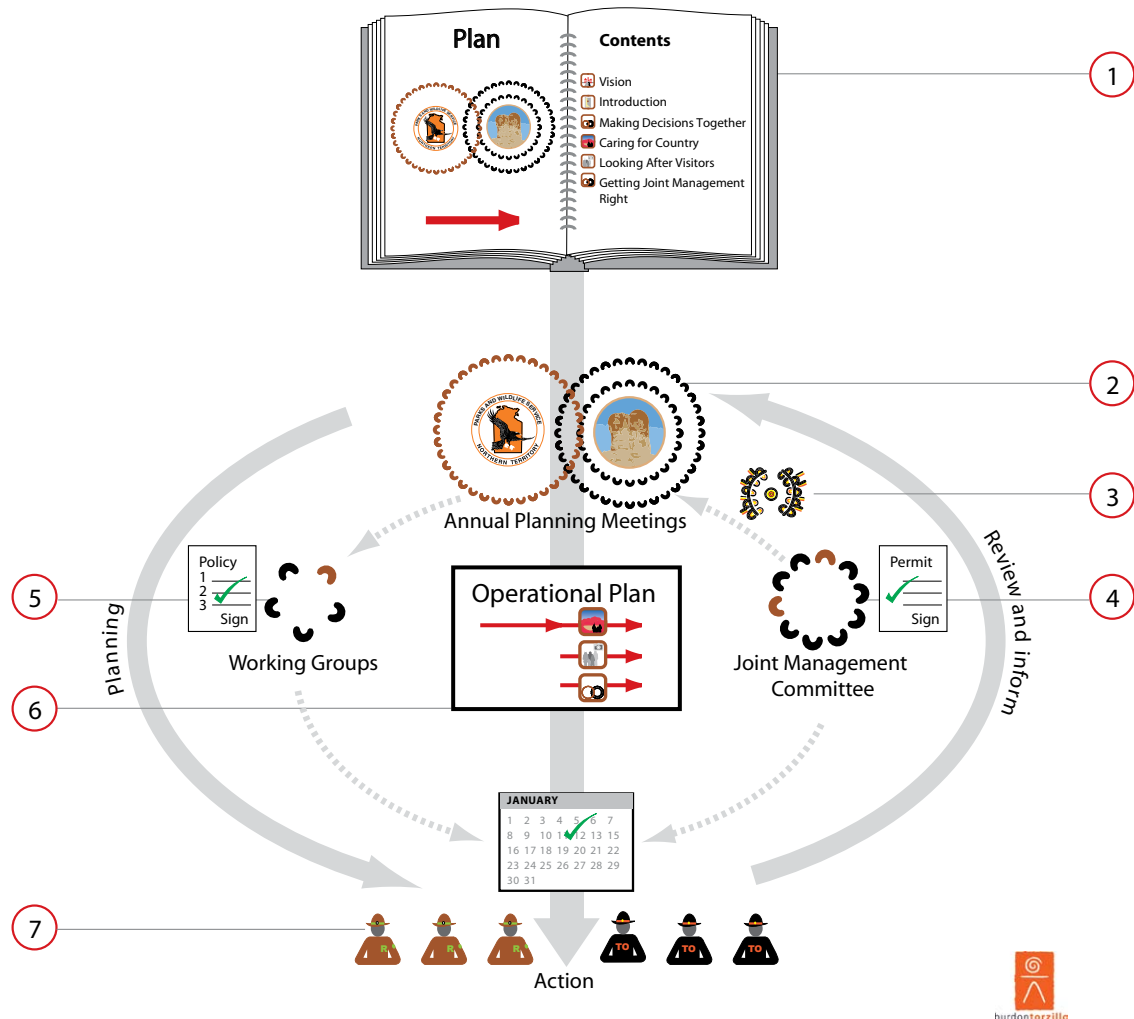
Well developed policy and guidelines are necessary to guide the partners in their decision making. A small Joint Management Committee, consisting of Parks and Wildlife staff and Traditional Owners is required to identify working groups to develop policy and guidelines. The Joint Management Committee may also provide management directions outside of the annual planning cycle if required, on the basis of protocols/guidelines established by the Traditional Owners as a group.

It is recognised that the Parks and Wildlife Service may require targeted cross cultural training to operate effectively and appropriately with the decision making processes of Traditional Owners. Likewise, Traditional Owners may need appropriate training and capacity building to meaningfully participate in joint management.

The Central Land Council (CLC) has an important role in assisting joint management and played a major role in the development of this Plan. The *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* defines the CLC’s role as representing and protecting the interests of the Traditional Owners in relation to the Reserve’s management, in particular to:

- Represent and support Traditional Owners’ interests and facilitate consultations
- Assist with monitoring joint management processes
- Facilitate resolutions between Traditional Owners and Parks and Wildlife, if needed.

Figure 1: How decision making and planning will work



Shared decision making and planning

- 1 **Joint Management Plan**
An agreement between the Joint Management Partners about managing the reserve together.
- 2 **Annual Planning Meetings**
Most decisions about how the reserve will be managed will be made at annual planning meetings by all Traditional Owners and rangers.
- 3 **Central Land Council**
Central Land Council will help at meetings and consultations.
- 4 **Joint Management Committee**
For management decisions that cannot wait, a special meeting will be held with the Joint Management Committee. Information will be communicated to all Traditional Owners at annual planning meetings.
- 5 **Working groups**
Small groups of interested Traditional Owners and PWS to review and/or develop policies and procedures and information, as needed.
- 6 **Operational Plans**
Annual plans which set out activities agreed between the Joint Management Partners, reviewed each year.
- 7 **The Plan in Action**
Rangers and Traditional Owners carry out agreed management under the Joint Management Plan and Operational Plan.



Management directions

2.1 Annual planning meetings - Once a year the joint management partners will hold a joint management planning meeting. All Traditional Owners will be invited to attend and participate in decision making. Other stakeholders may be invited to provide information at meetings where appropriate.

The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- Share information between the Parks and Wildlife Service and Traditional Owners
- Review progress against management directions in this Plan
- Review satisfaction of the partners with joint management processes and the joint management partnership
- Review and provide advice regarding the development of policies and procedures;
- Approve operational plans for the next year
- Provide direction to the Joint Management Committee.

2.2 Special meetings – From time to time, management issues will arise which need to be dealt with outside the annual planning cycle. Examples include whether to approve a permit application to a significant infrastructure or development proposal.

A **Joint Management Committee** will be established comprised of a core group of Traditional Owners and the Parks and Wildlife Service. This core group will make decisions on behalf of the larger Traditional Owner group on an agreed management activities. Where decisions are particularly significant or culturally sensitive, the whole Traditional Owner group will be involved. The wider Traditional Owner group will be kept informed of any decisions which are made at Joint Management Committee meetings.

2.3 Working groups - While there is much that can be achieved at an effective planning meeting, both partners also acknowledge that establishing smaller working groups of Traditional Owners and Parks and Wildlife representatives may be necessary to develop detailed policies and procedures, plans and information for visitors. The composition of groups will depend on the matters being decided and will be determined by the partners at annual planning meetings or by the Joint Management Committee. Senior Traditional Owners need to be represented in working groups. Traditional Owners will be paid for specialist cultural advice from Parks service funds.

2.4 Routine operations – Traditional Owners acknowledge that there are many day-to-day decisions rangers need to make which do not require the explicit approval of the joint management partners. These include decisions made about servicing facilities, visitor monitoring and emergency response. Traditional Owners acknowledge that routine activities are the responsibility of the Parks and Wildlife Service and are happy for rangers to make routine decisions and provide feedback at annual planning meetings.

2.5 Information exchange – Joint Management Committee members will be responsible for passing on information to the wider Traditional Owner group. Parks and Wildlife will ensure that information is communicated effectively to Traditional Owners at meetings.

2.6 Dispute resolution – The joint management partners will aim to resolve disputes through open discussion and communication, involving the Central Land Council as required or requested by the Traditional Owners. However, should a dispute arise between the joint management partners which cannot be resolved, the partners will follow the dispute resolution process set out in the Lease.

Protecting the values of the Reserve will underpin all management decisions.



3. Caring for country

“When we think about country, we think about the strong Dreaming.”

Introduction

The joint management partners and the wider community want to protect Chamber’s Pillar Historical Reserve and ensure that present and future generations can continue to enjoy its scenic attractions while learning about history and culture. This section relates to the management of the Reserve’s cultural and natural resources.

Chamber’s Pillar is a small conservation reserve valued mainly for its history, cultural sites and geomorphology. While a range of plant and animal species are represented, the biodiversity values of the Reserve are not significant. Accordingly, while the partners aim to protect the Reserve from the negative impacts of erosion, weeds and feral animals and ensure that appropriate fire management occurs, management of these and other issues will focus on the needs of visitors and protecting the natural and cultural heritage values of Chambers Pillar, Castle Rock and Window Rock.

The Traditional Owners of Chamber’s Pillar see people and land as fundamentally connected. Joint management then, brings a new way of looking at managing country. Care and protection of natural values is as important as before but will occur with Aboriginal interests and knowledge of country complementing scientific approaches to land management. Traditional Owners say “it’s important for us to teach our kids what it’s there for, who we are”. They want to make sure that looking after country means that knowledge and traditions are maintained and passed on.

Principles for managing country

- Managing country well means managing natural, cultural and historical values together.
- Land management activities should be consistent with protecting the scenic and historical values of the Reserve.
- The management of sites of cultural significance and culturally related knowledge is the responsibility of Traditional Owners.
- Traditional Owners visiting country is an important part of keeping country and culture healthy and passing knowledge on to the next generation.
- Visitor education and control is essential to protect the special values of the Reserve.
- Erosion is a significant threat to both the features and ecosystems of the Reserve and needs particular management attention.
- Threats such as weeds and feral animals can negatively impact land and wildlife and need to be managed.
- Fire is a natural part of the landscape and needs to be carefully managed.

Managing cultural and historical values

“Old people used to look after that place before the rangers.”

Our aims

- To protect significant sites and people's intellectual property.
- To allow cultural obligations to be fulfilled.
- To incorporate traditional and historical knowledge, skills and experiences into management programs for the Reserve.
- To conserve the historic engravings on the Pillar.
- To ensure that visitors have the opportunity to enjoy and appreciate the cultural and historic values of the Reserve.

Background

A Living Cultural Landscape

Traditional Owners understand the landscape within and outside the Reserve as a rich body of ancestral activities which invest all its features with powerful and fundamentally life-giving meaning and significance. Respect for country needs to be strongly encouraged across the Reserve. Chambers Pillar, Castle Rock and Window Rock are particular focus for culturally significant songs, dances, stories and knowledge which are all an intrinsic part of Traditional Owners' ways of identifying and connecting to country. These three features are all registered sacred sites under the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act* and are further protected by the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act*.

While maintaining deep and sustained connections to the sites and Dreamings of the Reserve, Traditional Owners acknowledge that since the arrival of non-Aboriginal people to the region the area has been “opened up” and as a result access can no longer be restricted. However, it remains critical that visitors understand the significance of all three sacred sites and behave respectfully in relation to all country in the Reserve. This means that climbing the features is strictly prohibited, other than via the steps and viewing platform provided at the Pillar.

Traditional Owners are responsible for looking after the country under customary law. Parks and Wildlife will accommodate Traditional Owners' customary obligations including respecting the need to access country and maintain traditions, and acknowledgement that men's and women's sites require different management considerations.

Knowledge provided to visitors enhances their cultural experience and promotes respect for the cultural and spiritual aspects of the Reserve. An improved understanding and appreciation may reduce the risk of unintentional damage to significant areas. Traditional Owners are keen to share public stories with visitors, however secret and sacred cultural knowledge will not be available for public information. The Traditional Owners request that the public respect their obligation to maintain the integrity of their culture and traditions.

Arrernte people continue to gather bush foods such as bush tomatoes and witchetty grubs from across the Chamber's Pillar region. Bush medicines and *pituri* (bush tobacco) are other important items which are still collected and many Traditional Owners have considerable knowledge about plant and animal species in the area.

Senior Traditional Owners remember gathering bush tucker and medicines, as well as hunting goanna and small wallaby when they visited and camped in the area. Most men say that the Reserve area itself is not a particularly good habitat for kangaroos or other animals. Hunting has thus not been a main activity here in the past or at the current time.

Under the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act*, Traditional Owners have the right to hunt wildlife, gather bush foods and medicines and use the land in accordance with Aboriginal tradition. Traditional Owners have expressed that they would like to exercise this right and acknowledge that potential impacts of this activity to the values of the reserve should be minimal and must be for traditional purposes only. They also acknowledge that due to the size of the Reserve public safety is a major consideration and the partners have agreed that they will not hunt with firearms.

The impact of traditional hunting and gathering will be reviewed annually at meetings and informally during management activities involving both partners. Bush tucker and wildlife collection should be low key and not significantly impact on the natural and scenic values of the Reserve.

Sustained connection to country means that Traditional Owners have detailed historical knowledge of the region's more recent past and have passed down ancestral knowledge through the generations. This knowledge encompasses Indigenous ecological knowledge, oral histories of times before and after European settlement and knowledge regarding the *Altyerre* (creation time).



Looking after country means that traditions are maintained and passed on.

Ensuring that knowledge is passed onto young people is of particular concern to Traditional Owners, recognising that “they need to take it over one day”. They want to share their experiences and teach the young people about special sites and how to look after and use the country. Sharing knowledge between families is also important.

Maintaining and passing this information on remains the responsibility of Traditional Owners. However, joint management can provide opportunities for older and younger Traditional Owners to work together and visit country. Such opportunities may foster the transfer of knowledge to younger generations and the Parks and Wildlife Service aims to assist this process where appropriate.

Traditional Owners are also willing to share knowledge with rangers and the public to improve Reserve management and foster improved understanding of Aboriginal ways of life in the wider community. Traditional Owners' cultural and ecological knowledge will be incorporated for richer interpretation of the Reserve and its values to the public.

Historically, it has predominantly been men's stories and knowledge that have been documented in the region. Future documentation of Aboriginal knowledge for interpretation purposes needs to take into account that men and women often know and act in relation to country in different ways.

Early European history

Chamber's Pillar has great significance as a place which helps us imagine the recent history of Central Australia. Names engraved into the Pillar are a tangible reminder of colonisation in the region and the stories of explorers, pastoralists and settlers over the past one hundred and fifty years. Old engravings are also a reminder of how Traditional Owners are historically connected to the area and how they have been an indispensable part of the pastoral industry in the region.

Protecting historic engravings is a key management concern.



Protecting the historic values of the Reserve is a key management concern. Great care is needed to conserve the historic engravings – once destroyed, they cannot be restored or reconstructed. The joint management partners have obligations to protect the whole Reserve, including the engravings, under the *Heritage Conservation Act*.

The Pillar has already been irreparably damaged by graffiti. The presence of graffiti also encourages further graffiti highlighting the need for community and visitor awareness of the importance of respecting the Pillar. An unpublished report, *Recommendations for the Conservation of Chamber's Pillar* (1995) outlines a number of different methods to disguise or remove graffiti but there is no way to restore the Pillar to its original state. Prior to any work on the engravings, specialist conservation advice will be sought to ensure that the work is consistent with the *Burra Charter* guidelines and consent will be obtained under the *Heritage Conservation Act*.

Recording and monitoring where and when graffiti occurs plays an important part in long-term management of the problem. At present, rangers check for graffiti when they visit the Reserve. Any new inscriptions are photographed and recorded. Signs encourage visitors to respect the historic values of the Pillar and informs them about the legal consequences of vandalism. Rangers also encourage respectful appreciation of the Pillar during winter campfire talks. Graffiti has declined in recent years perhaps as a result of management and growing public awareness.



Strong joint management will ensure sacred sites are protected according to Traditional Owners' wishes.

Cultural heritage and sacred site clearances

Protection for places that are of cultural significance in the Northern Territory is afforded under overlapping legislation. The *Heritage Conservation Act* gives specific protection to archaeological sites, resources and declared heritage places in the Northern Territory. As the entire Reserve was declared a heritage place in 1994, clearance must be sought for works to the Reserve.

The Commonwealth *Aboriginal Land Rights Act (N.T.) 1976* (ALRA) gives legal recognition to areas which that Act terms "sacred sites" and defines as:

"a site that is sacred to Aboriginals or is otherwise of significance according to Aboriginal tradition, and includes any land that, under a law of the Northern Territory, is declared to be sacred to Aboriginals or of significance according to Aboriginal tradition".

The ALRA makes it an offence to enter or remain on land that is a sacred site. There are three registered sacred sites on the Reserve.

Complementary Northern Territory legislation, the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act 1989* (NTASSA), also provides protection for all sites that fall within the scope of this definition. This protection is generally provided in the form of an Authority Certificate from the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority (AAPA) in response to land use proposals. It means that the traditional Aboriginal owners have an enforceable right to say who enters their sacred sites, and what cannot happen on their sacred sites. Illegal entry, works on or use of a sacred site is an offence.

Strong joint management will ensure that sacred sites are protected in accordance with Traditional Owners' wishes. Under the ALRA the Central Land Council have a specific function to *"assist Aboriginals in the taking of measures likely to assist in the protection of sacred sites"* and under its established procedures will carry out this role in facilitating joint management.

Management directions

3.1 Aboriginal culture – Parks and Wildlife acknowledge that Traditional Owners are responsible for their cultural matters and activities on the Reserve and will take their advice.

3.2 Culturally sensitive areas – Parks and Wildlife will uphold restrictions for sacred sites or culturally sensitive areas of the Reserve as directed by Traditional Owners. Climbing on the features, other than on the Pillar stairs and platform, is not permitted.

3.3 Traditional hunting and gathering – Rights in relation to hunting and harvest of plant materials from the Reserve for traditional purposes will extend only to Traditional Owners and impacts will be reviewed each year. Shooting on the Reserve will not be allowed.

3.4 Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) – Traditional Owners will retain ownership and control of their cultural and intellectual property consistent with a policy to be agreed upon between the Central Land Council and the Parks and Wildlife Service.

3.5 Managing culture and history – The joint management partners will develop a management program for the Reserve which will support Traditional Owners cultural aspirations where they can be incorporated into management programs. The partners and the Central Land Council will work together to identify additional resources if required. The program will provide for:

- Country visits and activities that will facilitate transmission of cultural knowledge and skills between Traditional Owner families, to the younger generation and to the rangers, as appropriate.
- Consolidation of documented cultural and historical information.
- Recording oral histories and knowledge on the advice of Traditional Owners as needed to better manage the Reserve and protect its values.
- Protection of indigenous cultural and intellectual property rights. See **3.4**.
- Identification of knowledge gaps regarding culture and history.
- Research into methods for removing graffiti and preservation of the Pillar.
- Training and employment for Traditional Owners in cultural site management and interpretation.
- Continued graffiti monitoring as a part of routine patrols and encouragement of visitors to respect the Pillar during face to face interpretation.

3.6 Cultural heritage and sacred site clearances – The Central Land Council will have sacred site clearance responsibility for all proposed work on the Reserve. However the joint management partners may agree from time to time that a proponent may require an AAPA Authority Certificate under the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act*. As the entire Reserve is a heritage place, clearance must also be sought under the *Heritage Conservation Act* for works.

Managing natural and ecological values

*“There used to be seeds for damper
but there’s nothing now.”*

Our aims

- To protect the natural landscape, scenic values and character of the Reserve from impacts associated with people, wildfire, weeds and feral animals.
- To protect the geology and soils of the Reserve by minimising erosion and rehabilitating eroded areas where appropriate.
- To incorporate Indigenous Ecological Knowledge (IEK) into management decisions for the Reserve.

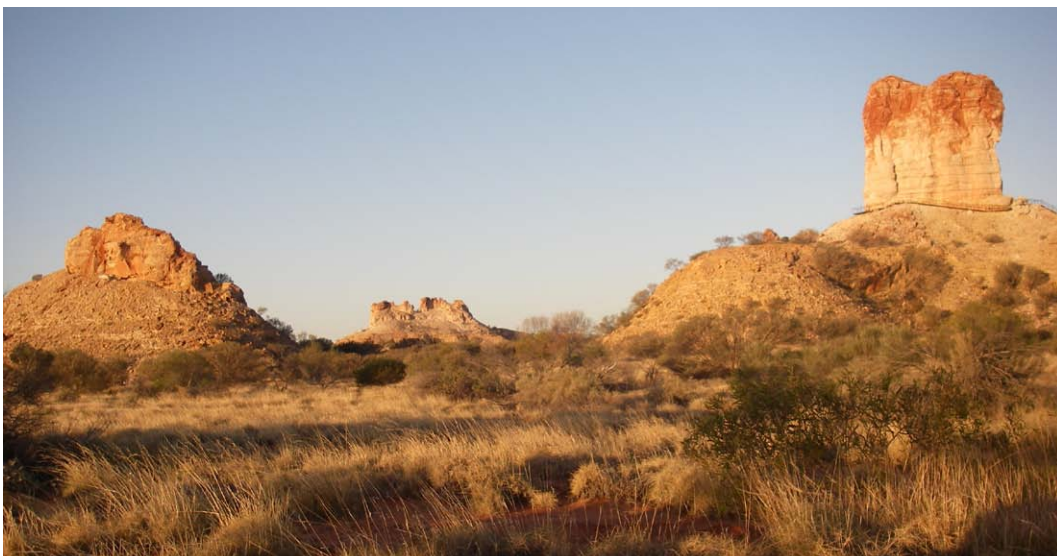
Background

Management of this small Reserve has focused on maintaining visitor facilities, preserving the Pillar and interpreting the natural and cultural features to the public. There are significant challenges associated with preserving and maintaining plant and animal communities when the area of the Reserve is so small and surrounded by pastoral properties. Considerable management effort would need to go into preserving the natural integrity of the Reserve with relatively little reward. As the Reserve is too small for it to be viable for species conservation, this focus of management effort will continue.

Scenic character and landscape

The sparse and gently undulating sand hills of the Reserve and its striking geological features are set amongst sandy hummock grasslands, punctuated by groves of desert oaks, mallee and acacia. The community want to preserve these significant scenic values and ensure that future generations have the opportunity to appreciate them. At sunset and sunrise the Pillar is particularly stunning as the sandstone changes colour with the sun. It is one of the Reserve’s most dramatic attractions.

Colourful sandstone formations are particularly dramatic at sunrise and sunset.



Traditional Owners' appreciation of the beauty of this landscape is connected to ancestral deeds of the *Altyerre*, or creation period, which adds to the significance of the Reserve's landscape and the importance of protecting it.

Developments on the Reserve to date have been relatively low key. Both partners agree that this approach should continue, to ensure that the visitor experience and scenic values of the Reserve are preserved.

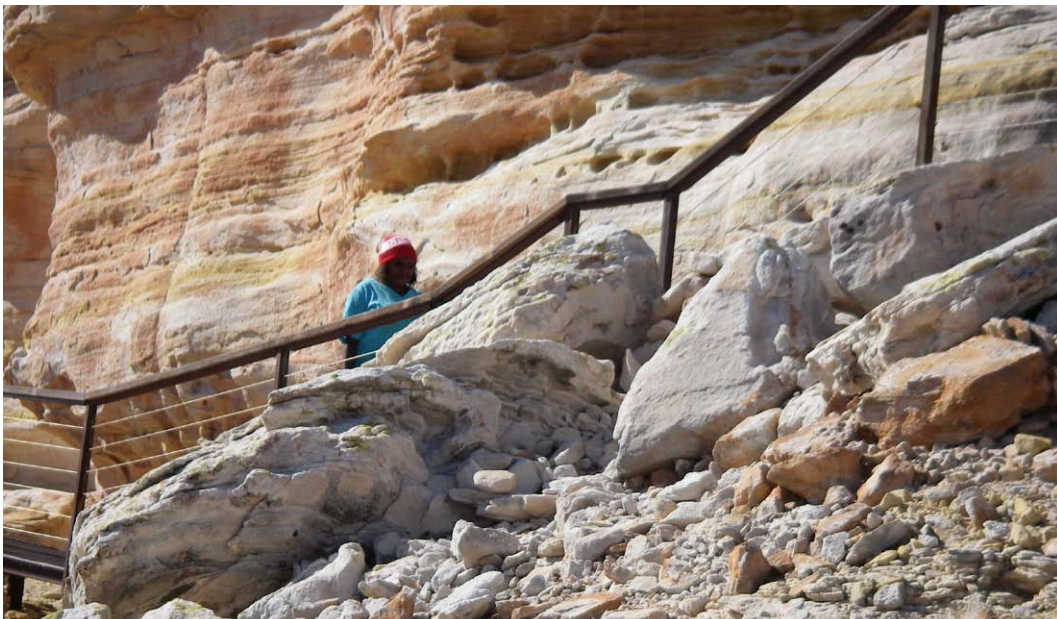
Geology

The Pillar is a significant butte formation comprised of late Devonian or Carboniferous Santo Sandstone, a remnant of the Cretaceous ocean floor. Deep weathering of the original sandstone between 37 and 12 million years ago leached red iron oxides, depositing them into a hard layer that resists erosion. Poorly developed vertical jointing resulted in blocks falling away over time, leaving the vertical walls of Chamber's Pillar with the distinctive rust coloured peak. Other features of the Reserve were formed through similar geomorphological processes.

The sandstone of Chamber's Pillar, Castle Rock and Window Rock is extremely soft and friable. Both partners want to make sure visitors respect the geomorphological and cultural significance of the features. Good interpretive signage which clearly explains appropriate ways for visitors to enjoy the Reserve combined with face to face discussions with rangers encouraging respectful appreciation is probably the most effective way to address this concern.

Soils and erosion

Most of the Reserve consists of gently undulating sand plains with rises and some scattered dunes. Landforms are comprised of siliceous and earthy sands and red brown earths. These soils are very susceptible to erosion by wind, rain and human activities. Accelerated erosion through poorly planned infrastructure and off track walking is a key management concern at the Reserve, posing a real threat to the natural, cultural and recreational values of the Reserve.



Well planned facilities will protect the values of the Reserve from accelerated erosion.

Any developments on the Reserve need to consider the potential for erosion. Soil conservation works and repositioning facilities or hardening of areas will be necessary where there is significant erosion due to traffic. Traditional Owners have requested that new soil and gravel extraction for roads and construction is undertaken outside the Reserve.

In 1985 a mining reserve (Reserve from Occupation No 1110, NTG 825) was gazetted to limit exploration and recovery of minerals within the Reserve. In September 2005, an Exploration Permit was granted under the Petroleum Act for a large area that includes the Reserve. The permit is due to expire in 2010 and is subject to a Central Land Council Exploration Agreement that requires consultation with Traditional Owners prior to any works.

The transfer of the Reserve to Aboriginal Freehold will not affect the existing Reserve from Occupation. The partners agree that mining is inconsistent with the scenic, cultural and environmental values of the Reserve. Traditional Owners are particularly concerned that any mining activity will destroy the Reserve and the cultural values associated with it.

Water resources

The Reserve is located in Australia's arid zone, where surface waters are temporary, occurring only after periods of high rainfall. There is no potable groundwater available for use at the Reserve and there is little chance that pit toilets will affect groundwater at 40 to 45 metres depth. Low visitation also means that visitor impacts from toilets are minimal. It is also highly unlikely that the Reserve's ecosystems are affected by groundwater levels.

Protecting the scenic values of the Reserve is a priority for the partners.



Native plants and animals

Joint management brings expanded opportunities for Traditional Owners to utilise and share their knowledge about native plants and animals. They maintain considerable knowledge about the uses and associations of native plants and animals as foods, medicines and for ceremonial purposes.

Traditional Owners want to make sure their knowledge is passed on to young people. They also want to share information with visitors as an expression of their ongoing connection to country and with rangers to better manage the Reserve. They are entitled to use the natural resources of the Reserve for cultural purposes and will continue to do so to keep their culture strong (see 3.3).

Chamber's Pillar Historical Reserve lies within the arid Finke Bioregion. The Reserve is home to a relatively small number of species typical of the region and does not hold any significant wildlife conservation values.

The vegetation of the Reserve can be broadly described as consisting of hummock grasslands with a sparse shrubland overstorey. *Triodia basedowii* and *Triodia pungens* typify the understorey with *Acacia aneura*, *Acacia kempeana* and *E. gamophylla* frequently dominant in the upper layer. A sparse shrub layer dominated by *Eremophila* and/or *Acacia* spp. is also typical. *Allocasuarina decaisneana* (desert oak) are also a feature of the Reserve.

No comprehensive botanical or fauna survey work has been undertaken at the Reserve. Vegetation communities have not been formally defined or mapped. Records show the presence of the endangered marsupial mole in the vicinity of the Reserve and data is currently unavailable for amphibians or invertebrates. Traditional Owners have expressed an interest in being involved in any future research activities which may occur at the Reserve.

Weeds and feral animals

Weeds and feral animals can adversely impact on the Reserve's natural and cultural values including reducing the availability of bush tucker and bush medicines. Weed and feral animal management will primarily aim to maintain the scenic value of the Reserve.

While the management of the Reserve aims to maintain and preserve natural habitats, it is not realistic to aim to exclude introduced plant species from the Reserve altogether. The spread of buffel grass is of concern at Chamber's Pillar but any management effort is not likely to be of lasting benefit. Traditional Owners are concerned about how the spread of weeds such as buffel grass has reduced the abundance of bush tucker and bush medicine. However, they are pragmatic about management options and primarily concerned with passing Indigenous ecological knowledge onto the next generation during visits to the Reserve.

Chamber's Pillar Historical Reserve is fenced which generally prevents feral animals such as cattle and camels, which are widespread across the landscape, from entering the Reserve. These fence lines need to be monitored and maintained by rangers to ensure that feral animals do not enter and damage the conservation values of the Reserve. Feral cats and foxes are also present in the Reserve but effective management options do not exist at present.

Fire

Fire has always been a part of the wider desert landscape. Failure to develop and maintain effective fire management practices can affect biological diversity and expose people, personal assets and assets to significant risk through wildfires.

Fire management has been a management program for many years and current focus is on protecting assets such as picnic tables, toilets, shelters and signs and perimeter burns (firebreaks). Fire management programs need to be undertaken in consultation with adjacent landholders.

Traditional Owners have worked with rangers on fire management in the Reserve, through flexible, paid work with the rangers and are keen to remain involved.

Management directions

3.7 Scenery – The natural character of the Reserve will be protected. Any development will be carefully sited and designed to be in harmony with the natural environment and significant sites, so as not to detract from the Reserve's outstanding landscape and scenic values.

3.8 The Pillar, Castle Rock and Window Rock – Any proposal that involves disturbance to these features will be subject to approval by the Traditional Owners and appropriate clearances. See **3.6**.

3.9 Soil erosion – All management activities will aim to minimise disturbance to the Reserve's soils and involve consultation with soil conservation experts. Rehabilitation of degraded areas will occur on a priority basis. Infrastructure and facilities will be sited to avoid areas susceptible to erosion and will be undertaken with a minimum of soil disturbance.

3.10 Excavation, mining and exploration – No soil or gravel extraction will occur inside the Reserve. The partners will seek to ensure that the Reserve from Occupation over the Reserve remains current.

3.11 Indigenous Ecological Knowledge – Traditional Owners will retain ownership and control of their Indigenous Ecological Knowledge. See **3.4**. Intergenerational transfer of information about traditional use of plants and animals will be encouraged and communicated to rangers and visitors as appropriate during routine management activities and visits to the Reserve.

3.12 Flora and fauna recording - Low key opportunistic monitoring and recording of native vegetation and animals will occur when rangers and Traditional Owners visit the Reserve. Images will be used to provide information at annual planning meetings. Native plants and animals with bush food or medicine value will be managed in accordance with directions from Traditional Owners. See **3.3**.

3.13 Weed management program – Management of weeds will guard against major visual impact on the visitor experience and will be reviewed each year. Management will pay particular attention to:

- Practical weed control methods
- Traditional Owners cultural concerns
- Employing Traditional Owners.

3.14 Feral animal management program – Rangers will:

- Remove stock and camels from the Reserve
- Maintain stock proof fences to a high standard.

3.15 Fire management program – The joint management partners will protect people, personal property and the Reserve from a large, destructive wildfire by:

- Maintaining boundary firebreaks
- Reducing fuel loads around park infrastructure
- Liaising with Reserve neighbours.

3.16 Stakeholder liaison – Rangers will continue to liaise with key stakeholders regarding fire, feral and access management as well as tourism opportunities on an “as needed” basis, keeping Traditional Owners informed at annual meetings.



Boundary breaks and co-operation with neighbours are essential for preventing large wildfires.

4. Looking after visitors

“Educate tourists about why it’s important to Aboriginal people.”

Introduction

This section addresses visitor management and identifies ways of accommodating visitor interests while protecting the values of the Reserve.

Over the years, Chamber’s Pillar has attracted many visitors including early explorers, pioneer settlers and different groups of Aboriginal people, who have all used the Pillar as a guiding marker and a rest area. Visitors are still captivated by the magnificence of the Pillar, as was Giles when he departed on his expedition of 1872:

“We turned our backs on this peculiar monument and left it in its loneliness and its grandeur – clothed in white sandstone, mystic, wonderful.”

Today, the spectacular natural formations of Chamber’s Pillar, Castle Rock and Window Rock remain the principal appeal of the Reserve for the general public. These formations are particularly impressive at sunrise and sunset. The Reserve also attracts visitors with an interest in the historic engravings on the Pillar and an appreciation of the remote desert landscape, accessible only by four wheel drive.

The joint management partners agree the following key messages should be communicated to visitors:

- We welcome you to experience this remote and tranquil place.
- We encourage you to learn about and respect the significant cultural and historical values.
- Please do not climb on the formations or damage parts of the Reserve.
- Help us to look after this special place by using the facilities provided and keeping the area natural.
- Make sure you stay safe and remember to bring water.

Principles for managing visitors

- Sharing the historical and cultural significance of the area and Traditional Owners continued connection to country with visitors through enjoyable and enriching experiences will encourage respect and protection of the Reserve.
- Visitor safety is paramount.
- Tourism provides benefits to the local community through promotion and increased demand for visitor services.

- Well designed facilities and infrastructure protects Reserve values and promotes positive visitor experiences.
- Monitoring visitor satisfaction, numbers and activities can improve management planning and identify enterprise opportunities for Traditional Owners.

Our aims

- To enable visitors to safely access and enjoy the Reserve without compromising the Reserve's values for future generations.
- To ensure that visitors have the opportunity to expand their understanding of the cultural, historic and natural values of the Reserve and region.

Access

In 2007 approximately 6500 people visited Chambers Pillar Historical Reserve. Visitation has been significantly higher in previous years, peaking in 2002 at over 8000. Most travel to the Reserve in private vehicles but a small number also attend with tour groups. Located within Australia's Red Centre National Landscape, the isolated and rugged nature of the Reserve is an attraction in itself with many visitors valuing the four wheel drive experience of accessing the Park as well as the spectacular natural landscape. The partners and visitors would like to see the quiet and peaceful nature of the Reserve maintained.

The access road to the park is four wheel drive only. Crossing the sandy bed of the Hugh River, the drive to Chamber's Pillar Historical Reserve follows the Charlotte Range west, crossing stark gibber plains gradually giving way to gently undulating sand dunes. Recent upgrades to the access road by capping dune crests and creek crossings has the potential to detract from the Reserve's appeal as a remote and tranquil destination by making the reserve more accessible to a wider range of vehicles. Vehicle access off marked tracks is not permitted within the Reserve.

Some Traditional Owners are concerned that the main access road to the campground runs too close to Castle Rock and sections of the access tracks and car parks for Chamber's Pillar and Castle Rock are subject to flooding and erosion. Soil conservation measures are required to protect the sensitive claypans from vehicle impact.

Although early ethnographic texts indicate that access to the Pillar was historically prohibited to all but the oldest and most trustworthy ritual men, access restrictions have not been in place for a long time. Senior knowledgeable Traditional Owners have said that the area is "free" and "open" for people to visit providing they show proper respect and keep off the formations. Accordingly, access to Chamber's Pillar is limited to the steps and viewing platform and visitors are not permitted to climb Castle Rock or Window Rock. Further, the friable sandstone of the features is easily damaged and expanded access would place their integrity and visitor safety at risk.

Typically, visitors to the Reserve do not venture beyond observing the Pillar and Castle Rock via marked tracks. Traditional Owners and rangers encourage visitors to remain on marked walking tracks to minimise erosion and protect the natural values of the area.

Facilities and activities

Facilities are low key. The current campground is located approximately 300 metres from Chamber's Pillar and consists of ten campsites with two gas barbecues, eight picnic tables, five fire places and two pit toilets. There is no water available at the campground. Overnight camping fees are consistent with Parks and Wildlife standards across the Northern Territory and are paid through an honesty system.

A bough interpretation shelter with information about the Pillar and its geological and cultural significance is sited next to the campground. A short walk over the sand dunes brings visitors to the base of the Pillar. Visitors can enjoy the short walk around the base of the Pillar and out to the sunset viewing area where they can learn more about the feature from interpretive signs. Concrete steps and a steel viewing platform enable more energetic visitors to view the historic engravings closely. Visitors are able to view all aspects of Castle Rock via a marked track but there is no interpretive signage at the feature itself.

Whilst protecting the soft sandstone from erosion, the viewing platform at the Pillar detracts significantly from the low key nature of the Reserve and the visual amenity of the Pillar. Visitors, photography enthusiasts and the tourism sector frequently complain about the high visual impact of the structure which makes it difficult to capture a "natural" image from any angle.

An increase in the number of camper trailers and congestion in the campground and car parks during the peak tourist season diminishes the quality of visitor experiences, puts pressure on facilities and exacerbates problems such as illegal roadside camping and erosion. The existing campground area has been compacted over time and is subject to erosion.

The joint management partners have expressed interest in establishing improved camping facilities at the Reserve and both partners will be involved in the process of planning and redeveloping this facility. Traditional Owners have also suggested expanding the facilities at the Reserve to accommodate their ideas for potential tourism enterprises.

Facilities should be low key and not detract from the Reserve's natural and scenic values.



Chamber's Pillar Historical Reserve will continue to be managed for day visitors and campers. Campground cleaning and maintenance is undertaken on a weekly basis from May through September and fortnightly during summer.

Activities at the Reserve centre on visitors appreciating the scenic and historic values of the Reserve by viewing the geological formations and enjoying short walks. Photography is also a key activity at the Reserve, particularly at sunrise and sunset. It is hoped that cultural tours and talks will become a larger part of the visitor experience.

Information, interpretation and education

Information and interpretation plays an important role in visitor management and enjoyment by informing people about the values of the Reserve and how visitors can help protect them. Public education informs visitors about facilities, activities and relevant regulations and explains or interprets the Reserve's natural, cultural and historic features. Visitors are generally keen to learn more about Aboriginal culture and value the opportunity to meet local Indigenous people extremely highly.

Visiting Chamber's Pillar presents an opportunity for visitors to connect with local Arrernte people who retain their culture, their stories and connection to their country. Understanding that the Reserve is a living cultural landscape can enhance visitors' appreciation of the place and its people and encourage visitors to enjoy the Reserve with greater respect.

During winter, rangers give a weekly campfire talk which informs visitors about the cultural, geomorphological and historical values of the Reserve. Traditional Owners have expressed considerable interest in being involved in this type of personal interpretation. Some Traditional Owners have been employed in the tourism industry in the cooler months through a local tourism venture, Gunya Titjikala. Traditional Owners have also suggested educational activities which involve schools and young people from Titjikala and Alice Springs.

Visitor information is provided on interpretive signs at the bough shelter, viewing platform, sunset viewing area and at the base of the Pillar. The information focuses on the Reserve's fauna, flora, geomorphology, Aboriginal and historical values.



Visitors will be able to learn more about the significance of the area to the Reserve's Traditional Owners.

During the term of this Plan, signs will be updated to explain the importance of the Reserve to Traditional Owners in a contemporary context and provide Aboriginal place names. Traditional Owners would like the name of the Reserve to be changed to reflect their strong connection to country, the cultural values of the area and joint management. Traditional Owners will decide on an appropriate name through decision making processes outlined in Section 2.

Safety

Chamber's Pillar is a relatively safe place for visitors. Visitor information includes safety information. Although the Parks and Wildlife Service currently has emergency response procedures for all parks and reserves including Chamber's Pillar, its remote location underscores the need for visitors to be self reliant and prepared.

Management directions

4.1 Access

- **Vehicles** – Vehicles will continue to be restricted to designated tracks.
- **Bushwalking** - Visitors will be encouraged to remain on the marked walking tracks, but can access other areas of the reserve providing they “tread lightly” and do not climb on the features. Visitors are not permitted to climb Castle Rock or Window Rock. Access to Chamber's Pillar will be restricted to the stairs and viewing platform.
- **Camping and camp fires** – Camping will only be permitted in the campground. Visitors will be permitted to have fires only in fireplaces provided. Access road signage will inform visitors that firewood collection inside the Reserve is prohibited.
- **Pets** – Entry of pets will be consistent with existing Parks and Wildlife policy.
- **Rehabilitation** - Areas may be closed for erosion control and rehabilitation.
- **Cultural business** – The Reserve, or areas within it may be temporarily closed to the public for important ceremonies. See 3.2. This infrequent event would be subject to high profile public notice and involve communication with the Tourism Industry.

4.2 Future developments –The need to protect scenic, cultural, historical values and the character of the Reserve will underpin any future developments or changes to access and will be in keeping with these values. See 3.7, 3.8 and 3.9. Decisions will be made in accordance with structures and processes outlined in section 2 and will be subject to appropriate site clearances. See 3.6.

- **Vehicular access** – The public access track to Chamber's Pillar will be terminated at the campground due to flooding and erosion issues.

When funding becomes available, a section of the main access road will be realigned to protect Castle Rock and associated claypan.

The partners will liaise with the Road Network Division of the Department of Planning and Infrastructure to ensure the remote experience of accessing the Reserve is preserved.

- **Campground** – The joint management partners will re-design, expand and/or relocate the campground to accommodate camper trailers, ensure a high quality visitor experience and protect the area's sensitive environment from erosion. Consideration will be given to developing an area in the north west of the Reserve for joint management meetings and Traditional Owner tourism enterprises.
- **Walking tracks** – Sections of existing walking tracks will be realigned, formed up and hardened off to ensure safety and prevent erosion. A new track will be developed to link proposed camping to existing tracks.

The visual impact of the Pillar viewing platform will be reduced and alternative ways to view and appreciate the historic engravings will continue to be investigated.

4.3 Community education and interpretative program – Both partners will be involved in planning and delivering interpretation, information and community education programs where possible. Traditional Owners will ensure that all Aboriginal cultural information shared with visitors is accurate and appropriate. See 3.4.

4.4 Signs and language – The joint management partners will consider options for updating interpretive signage to ensure that Arrernte people, place names and language are represented. The name of the Reserve may be changed to reflect its cultural values more accurately. A transition period may be required to reduce market confusion.

4.5 Visitor safety – The Reserve's facilities and visitor management practices will be subject to ongoing risk assessment. Identified risks will be rectified on a priority basis. The emergency response plan will be annually reviewed and rangers will receive appropriate training.



Proposed developments aim to improve access and visitor enjoyment all year round.

5. Getting joint management right

*“If people are working on country,
they can keep culture strong.”*

Introduction

This section addresses the business of managing operational resources—including staff, funding and facilities - to support the implementation of actions identified in this Plan. Other important management activities include the administration of permits and commercial operations, and stakeholder engagement.

Whilst the Reserve is small and remote, joint management provides both new and continued opportunities for Traditional Owners to benefit from and participate in tourism and commercial enterprises associated with the Reserve. The joint management partners recognise that long-term support and capacity building will be needed for Traditional Owners to take up available opportunities. Bridging the gap will require training, employment and enterprise development, all of which are addressed in this section.

The need to continuously improve the knowledge base that supports management decision-making and to monitor change is integral to effective management. Administration of research, survey and monitoring activity is therefore addressed in this section.

Principles for managing business

- Management should focus on protecting the core values of the Reserve and use resources effectively.
- Participation, training and employment for Traditional Owners are joint management priorities.
- Well managed and appropriate enterprises can enhance visitors' experience of the Reserve and contribute to the local economy.
- Progress will be achieved by competent, well trained staff working towards outcomes in collaboration with Traditional Owners.
- Research, survey and monitoring of the Reserve's natural and cultural resources makes for better informed management decisions.
- Public support for the joint management of the Reserve is important and engaging stakeholders will assist with protection of the Reserve's core values.

Aims

- To ensure the directions of this Plan are achieved with adequate resources used efficiently.
- To support Traditional Owners to take full advantage of available employment opportunities.
- To support the uptake of concessions and contracts by local Aboriginal organisations and encourage emerging Aboriginal tourism enterprises associated with the Reserve.
- To encourage research, survey and monitoring activities that improves the community knowledge base and allow for better decision making.
- To ensure the public messages and images of the Reserve are accurate, appropriate and consistent with its values.
- To foster a supportive regional community and productive relations with others who have an interest in the Reserve's management.

Management, resources and operations

While it is intended that the management directions presented in this Plan are achieved, it must be remembered that practically all funding to manage the Reserve and funding to undertake proposed development is provided by the Northern Territory Government in the context of the Northern Territory wide park system. Resources for Chamber's Pillar – including staff, operational funds and capital resources such as vehicles and fire fighting equipment – are shared with other parks and reserves. Major works are funded through the minor and capital works programs and are subject to broader government priorities.

Due to its small size, Chamber's Pillar Historical Reserve is unstaffed and managed as a part of the Central District Parks cluster. Rangers visit at least once a week from May through September when visitor activity is highest and generally once a fortnight from October until April. The Central District currently operates with six permanent staff positions, four Indigenous trainees, a Senior District Ranger and a Chief District Ranger - responsible for East, Central and Barkly Districts – all based in Alice Springs.

Joint management can provide for the Traditional Owners to live on parks and reserves as a means for them to more actively contribute to natural and cultural resource management. Traditional Owners have said that they do not want to establish a living area on the Reserve itself. However, there are some Traditional Owner groups who are interested in establishing living areas in close proximity to Chamber's Pillar. The Reserve is surrounded by pastoral properties. There are no proposals to expand the Reserve.

The small size of the Reserve reinforces the importance of working closely with neighbours and other stakeholders. Chamber's Pillar is bounded by Maryvale and Idracowra pastoral properties and access to the Reserve is through Maryvale Station. Titjikala community is another important stakeholder and many residents of the community have strong interests in ensuring the Reserve is well managed.

Training, employment and enterprise development

Parks and Wildlife maintains a professional ranger work force. Staff will continue to participate in performance appraisal and career guidance programs as a means to monitoring staff satisfaction and identifying and meeting individual staff training needs. In addition, staff satisfaction and occupational health and safety will remain a key management concern.

Ensuring that the Parks and Wildlife Service staff and Traditional Owners receive appropriate training to enable them to actively and meaningfully participate in the processes of joint management is also critical to the joint management partnership. Governance training will be provided to the joint management partners in collaboration with the Central Land Council.

Throughout the planning process, Traditional Owners of Chamber's Pillar have highlighted the importance of employment for their families. They look forward to new opportunities as well as continuing and expanding existing ventures, working out on country and applying their skills, knowledge and expertise to better look after the Reserve. Both young people and older people can benefit from employment through the Parks and Wildlife Service.

Both flexible and permanent positions working at Chamber's Pillar will be limited by the scope of management activities at this small reserve and the number of full-time ranger positions available. While the Parks and Wildlife Service will make every effort to employ Traditional Owners and local Aboriginal people to work at Chamber's Pillar, it is important to acknowledge that the broader employment aspirations of Traditional Owners and their families cannot be met by joint management alone. Consequently, employment and training plans developed by the partners will need to be developed within a regional context and will involve other groups and organisations as required.

Parks and Wildlife will continue to offer flexible or periodic casual employment to Traditional Owners, their families and local Aboriginal people at Chamber's Pillar. Project based employment provides many benefits including work experience, skills exchange and an opportunity to build long-term working relationships. Traditional Owners at Chamber's Pillar and Rainbow Valley have been employed in burning, fencing, surveys and construction projects, with many receiving accredited training in the process. They say "we feel proud to be working on country".

Increased employment of Aboriginal people in the ranger workforce is a goal of the Parks and Wildlife Service, and local Aboriginal people will be encouraged to apply when positions become vacant. Support will be provided to potential employees who express interest and commitment. Suitably qualified Aboriginal people will be actively encouraged to fill any Parks and Wildlife vacancy.

Chamber's Pillar is a small Reserve visited by comparatively few people. However there remain some opportunities for Indigenous enterprises to be developed, particularly in the area of tourism. Indigenous tourism ventures roughly an hour's drive to the Reserve include luxury tent camping at Gunya Titjikala and Oak Valley tours and campground. These ventures highlight that Traditional Owners already have skills and experience in this area and underscore the need for a regional approach.

Tourism research continues to highlight the demand for Indigenous cultural experiences by international and domestic visitors to the Northern Territory. Research also suggests that for many visitors these experiences are not realised. Joint management provides an opportunity for Traditional Owners to present their living culture from their own perspective to visitors from all over Australia and the world. Traditional Owners have expressed particular interest in becoming more involved in the face to face interpretation of the Reserve to visitors and developing and selling products to tourists.

The joint management partners will liaise with the tourism industry and explore options for the development and promotion of tourism opportunities. Tourism NT is supportive of Traditional Owners' tourism aspirations and is willing to assist where appropriate.

While much of the maintenance of the Reserve is carried out by rangers, there are times when contracts may be let to carry out works which could employ Aboriginal people or businesses. The Lease provides for preference to be given to local Aboriginal people and businesses applying for contract work where capacity to meet contract requirements is demonstrated. In time, it is hoped that many programs for the Reserve can be partially or fully contracted to Aboriginal owned businesses. Potential concessions and maintenance contracts for the Reserve include construction, fencing, track work, repairs, campground management and maintenance.



Traditional Owners are pursuing new opportunities to work on country and gain skills and training.

Permits and commercial activities

Commercial activities on Northern Territory parks and reserves require a permit under By-law 13 of the *Territory Parks and Parks and Wildlife Conservation By-laws*. These permits state the rules and regulations permit holders need to abide by to ensure that their activities do not negatively affect the values of the park or reserve. Commercial activities at Chamber's Pillar are typically limited to filming and tours.

Since 2006 tour companies visiting Northern Territory parks and reserves have been required to have a permit issued under the Tour Operator Permit System. This system makes it possible to monitor operator activities and the impact of tour groups. It also provides a means for the joint management partners to communicate with tour operators that use the Reserve.

With the approval of the joint management partners and consent of the Iterrkewarre Aboriginal Land Trust, this Plan also provides the Northern Territory Government, as the lessee, the right to sublease or license portions of the Reserve for the purposes of public infrastructure.

No concession permits for the Reserve have been issued to date. Under the joint management arrangements the Lease provides for preference to be given to local Aboriginal people and businesses in granting licenses and leases to operate concessions where capacity is demonstrated.

The joint management partners want to promote the Reserve to tourists and to the wider community. However, it is important that information and images distributed to visitors are accurate and appropriate. Commercial filming and photography permits will be issued in accordance with the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation By-laws*. The Commercial Filming and Photography Policy and related procedures of the Parks and Wildlife Service allow individual parks and reserves to have supplementary commercial filming and photography policies and guidelines.

Practical commercial film and photography guidelines are necessary. A working group will develop guidelines which reflect the interests of the joint management partners in relation to this Reserve. Composition of the working group will be determined by the partners at an annual planning meeting or by the Joint Management Committee.

Permits may be required for some activities.



Research, survey and monitoring

Effective management decisions need good information about the Reserve's values, visitor use, environmental trends and the effectiveness of management actions.

Most research, survey and monitoring programs are carried out as internal projects by the Parks and Wildlife Service. There has been little research or monitoring carried out at the Reserve due to its small size and low biological values. Despite this, research will be encouraged and approved research applications will be issued with a Research Permit in accordance with the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation By-laws*. Traditional Owners have knowledge of the Reserve that can contribute to research outcomes. A working group will develop guidelines for approving external research proposals that complement Parks and Wildlife policy. Composition of the working group will be determined by the partners at an annual planning meeting or by the Joint Management Committee. Traditional Owner participation and employment will be actively encouraged in research, survey and monitoring projects. Policy agreed by the partners and research permit conditions will require the cultural and intellectual property rights of Traditional Owners are protected.

Visitor monitoring is essential to effectively manage the Reserve. Data on visitor numbers, demographics, behaviour and satisfaction levels can be used to guide aspects of visitor management. Planning and design of facilities and interpretation programs relies largely on data from visitor monitoring programs.

Visitor monitoring also has the potential to provide valuable information to Traditional Owners interested in developing tourism enterprises. Traditional Owners will be kept informed about upcoming visitor surveys and given the opportunity to contribute to the direction such surveys take.

Joint management success will be measured against achievement of the aims in this plan and the satisfaction of the joint management partners. Keeping good photographic records of works and activities on the Reserve is one way to ensure that progress is measurable and communicated to Traditional Owners.

Management directions

5.1 Management programs and annual operational plans – The joint management partners will plan and review management programs and annual operational plans for the Reserve. Paid Traditional Owner involvement in Reserve management programs will be maximised.

5.2 Day-to-day management – The Parks and Wildlife Service will be responsible for the day-to-day management of the Reserve.

5.3 Financing – Parks and Wildlife will finance and resource the Reserve's ongoing management including administrative functions, staff, infrastructure and services. External funds may be sought to address specific joint management projects and culturally based projects of Traditional Owner interest.

5.4 Living areas and expansion of the Reserve – Any future proposals for living areas on, or in the vicinity of the Reserve, or expansion of the Reserve, will be considered by the joint management partners.

5.5 Training, employment and enterprise development – Achievable operational plans and a program for training, employment and enterprise development will be determined by the partners every year. Opportunities, including direct and flexible employment, contracts and enterprise development will be reviewed annually, together with Traditional Owners' interests and capacity. Engagement of Traditional Owners will be consistent with NT Government legislation and policies and will be a primary objective for Parks and Wildlife Service as a joint management partner. The Parks and Wildlife Service will ensure that administrative processes are efficient and where it cannot directly assist, will endeavour to arrange training and business development support to Traditional Owners through other agencies.

- **Professional development** – Professional standards and competencies of staff will be supported by ongoing training in all aspects of park management with special emphasis on cross-cultural training run by both Traditional Owners and other providers.
- **Governance training** – Governance training will be provided to the joint management partners to improve their understanding of the responsibilities of joint management and equip them with the tools and skills to work effectively in the partnership.
- **Indigenous employment opportunities** – Parks and Wildlife will continue to identify and provide opportunities for flexible and direct employment and training for Aboriginal people. The Aboriginal ranger traineeship program will continue as a means to increase opportunities for local Aboriginal people to become rangers.
- **Contract services** – Traditional Owners that can demonstrate capability and Aboriginal organisations they support will be preferred contract service providers. Other contractors providing training and employment to local Aboriginal people will be regarded favourably.

- **Tourism** – Traditional Owners will be encouraged to continue to take up commercial tourism opportunities including camp fire talks, campground maintenance, cultural tours or other viable enterprises. Appropriate support will be provided and agencies such as the Central Land Council will assist with developing ideas and identifying service providers to assist with developing business plans, skills and funding sources. The joint management partners will liaise with the tourism industry through established forums and organisations as required.

5.6 Permits – Working groups will develop guidelines which reflect the interests of the joint management partners in relation to this Reserve. Composition of the working group will be determined by the partners at annual planning meetings or by the Joint Management Committee. Guidelines will be developed for a range of permit applications including: commercial film and photography permits; concessions; public gatherings; tour operators; and research. Where proposed activities comply with the general guidelines developed by the partners, permits may be issued without consulting with Traditional Owners. Consultation with the Traditional Owners will be required if the proposal involves special access, may be in conflict with the wishes of Traditional Owners or may be part of a major commercial project.

In the interim period, the Parks and Wildlife Service will inform the Central Land Council of all permit applications and the Joint Management Committee or Traditional Owners will be consulted where appropriate.

5.7 Monitoring and evaluation

- **Research, survey and monitoring** – Programs will be described in operational plans and be subject to annual review by the joint management partners. Participation by Traditional Owners and employment in research, survey and monitoring projects will be maximised. Aboriginal knowledge will be incorporated in project objectives and outcomes where appropriate. Intellectual cultural and property rights of Traditional Owners will be protected. See **3.4**.
- **Visitor monitoring** – Visitor monitoring projects will be determined by the partners and conducted locally using existing resources. Where data is available, visitor numbers, impacts, activities and satisfaction results will be fed back to the joint management partners for planning and decision-making. Co-operation with Tourism NT for four wheel drive market development research will be encouraged.
- **Performance monitoring** – Management performance monitoring will be carried out through:
 - Annual review of operational plans, measuring their success against the aims and objectives of this Plan
 - Monitoring the joint management partners' satisfaction.

A framework for satisfaction monitoring will be developed by the partners.

6. Appendixes

Appendix 1. Selected information sources

Australia ICOMOS, 1999. *The Burra Charter*.

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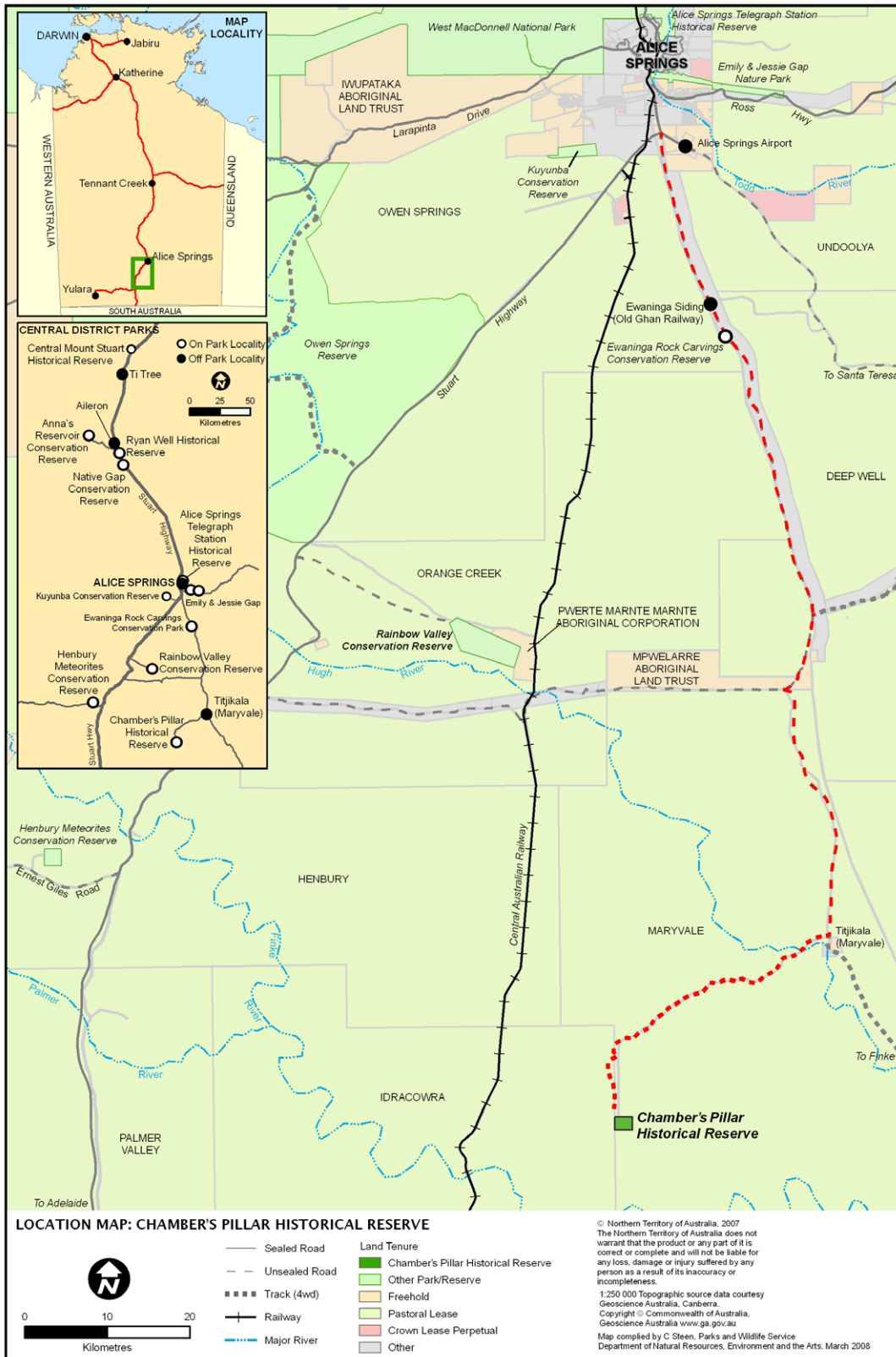
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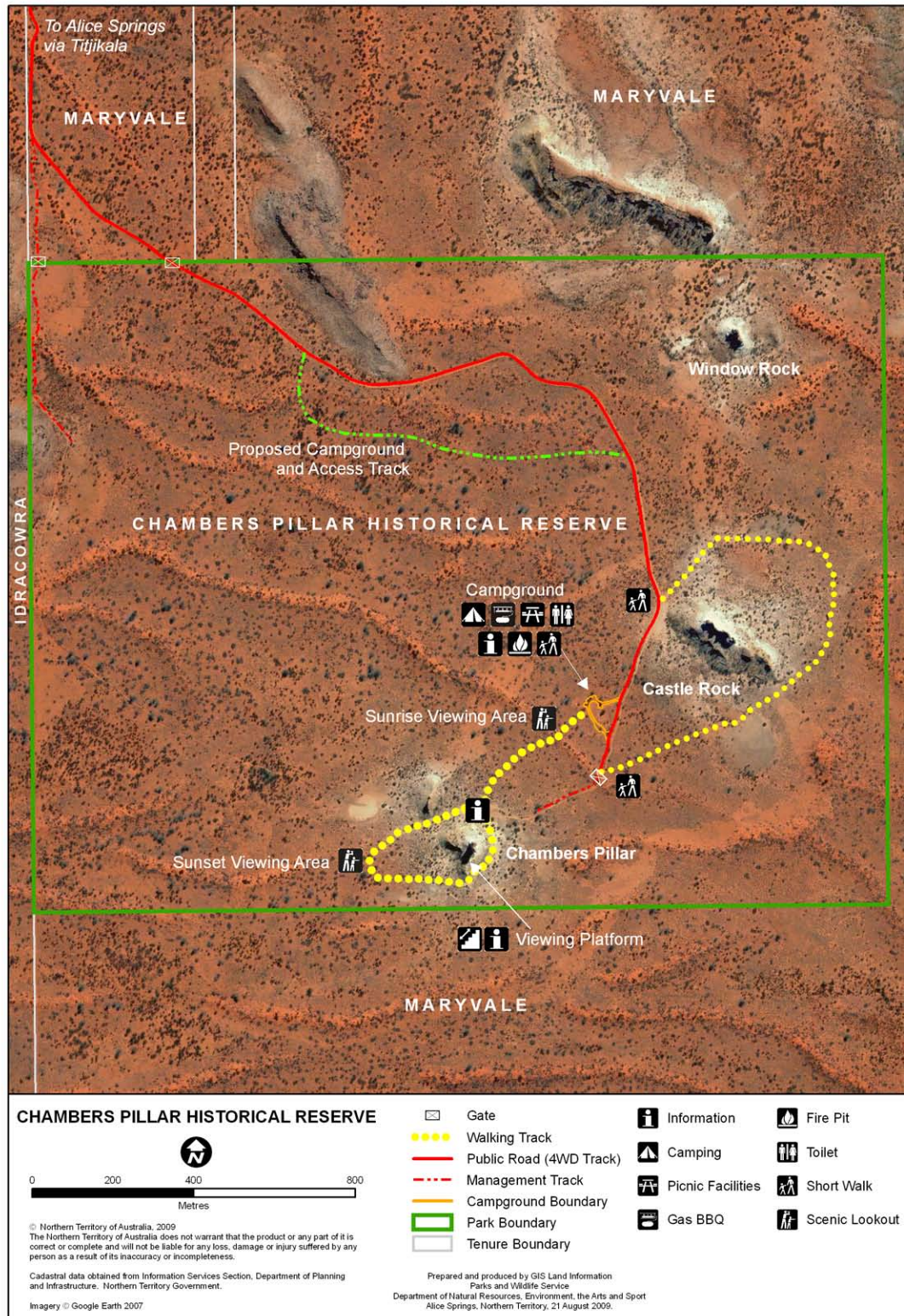
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Appendix 2. Reserve location



Appendix 3. Reserve map



Appendix 4. Extracts from the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act

part iii – joint management of certain parks and reserves

Division 3 – Joint management partners, objective and principles

25AA. Joint management partners

(1) The joint management partners for a park or reserve are –

- (a) the Territory or a body nominated by the Territory as the representative of the Territory; and
- (b) the traditional Aboriginal owners of the park or reserve.

(2) The joint management partners are together responsible for the management of the park or reserve.

(3) The joint management partners must perform their functions under this Part in respect of a park or reserve in a manner that –

- (a) is consistent with any lease referred to in section 8(c) or 10(1)(f) of the *Framework Act* entered into in respect of the park or reserve;
- (b) is consistent with the joint management agreement referred to in section 8(d) of the *Framework Act* entered into in respect of the park or reserve;
- (c) is consistent with any indigenous land use agreement referred to in section 8(e) of the *Framework Act* entered into in respect of the park or reserve;
- (d) achieves the objective stated in section 25AB;
- (e) is in accordance with the principles stated in section 25AC; and
- (f) is in accordance with the joint management plan for the park or reserve.

25AB. Objective of joint management

The objective of joint management of a park or reserve is to jointly establish an equitable partnership to manage and maintain the park or reserve as part of a comprehensive and representative system of parks and reserves in the Territory and for the following purposes:

- (a) benefiting both the traditional Aboriginal owners of the park or reserve and the wider community;
- (b) protecting biological diversity;
- (c) serving visitor and community needs for education and enjoyment.

25AC. Principles of joint management

The objective is to be achieved by managing the park or reserve in accordance with the following principles:

- (a) recognising, valuing and incorporating Aboriginal culture, knowledge and decision making processes;
- (b) utilising the combined land management skills and expertise of both joint management partners;
- (c) recognising and addressing the need for institutional support and capacity building of the joint management partners;
- (d) recognising that community living areas in or in close proximity to parks and reserves are an integral part of the natural and cultural resource management of parks and reserves;
- (e) involving continuing statutory responsibilities and functions of the Minister with respect to parks and reserves;
- (f) managing parks and reserves may include cooperative management agreements for areas of land outside parks and reserves;
- (g) establishing a process for the consideration of applications for mining an petroleum

Division 6 – Role of Land Councils

25AO. Functions of Land Councils in relation to parks and reserves

(1) Pursuant to section 23(2) of ALRA, the following functions are conferred on a Land Council:

- (a) to ascertain and express the wishes and the opinion of Aboriginals living in its area as to the management of the parks and reserves in that area and as to appropriate legislation concerning those parks and reserves;
- (b) to protect the interests of the traditional Aboriginal owners of, and other Aboriginals interested in, those parks and reserves;
- (c) to consult with the traditional Aboriginal owners of, and other Aboriginals interested in, those parks and reserves about the use of those parks and reserves;
- (d) to negotiate with persons desiring to obtain an estate or interest (including a licence) in any of those parks or reserves on behalf of the traditional Aboriginal owners of that park or reserve and any other Aboriginals interested in that park or reserve;
- (e) to supervise, and provide administrative and other assistance to, the Park Land Trusts holding, or established to hold, park freehold title in parks and reserves in its area.

(2) In carrying out its functions under subsection (1) in relation to a park or reserve in its area, a Land Council must have regard to the interests of, and must consult with, the traditional Aboriginal owners of the park or reserve and any other Aboriginals interested in the park or reserve and, in particular, must not take any action (including, but not limited to, the giving or withholding of consent in any matter in connection with the park freehold title held by a Park Land Trust) unless the Land Council is satisfied that –

- (a) the traditional Aboriginal owners of the park or reserve understand the nature and purpose of the proposed action and, as a group, consent to it; and
- (b) any Aboriginal community or group that may be affected by the proposed action has been consulted and has had adequate opportunity to express its view to the Land Council.

(3) In this section –

“area”, in relation to a Land Council, has the same meaning as in ALRA;

“park freehold title” has the same meaning as in the Framework Act;

“Park Land Trust” has the same meaning as in the Framework Act.